



In response to rising antisemitism in the United States, the Association of Jewish Libraries offers the [Love Your Neighbor](#) series of book lists for all young readers. Books read in youth impact future outlooks, and it is our hope that meeting Jews on the page will inspire friendship when readers meet Jews in real life.

This is the seventh in a series of book lists intended to provide children and their families with a greater understanding of the Jewish religion and its people. This list highlights the experiences of Black Jews, but books on this topic are sadly limited, and books by Black Jewish authors are even more rare. AJL urges the children's literature community to increase representation of Jews of Color, especially [#ownvoices](#) books. To stay abreast of issues relating to Jews of Color check out [Be'chol Lashon](#) and the [Jewish Multiracial Network](#).

Book List #7: The Black Jewish Experience

PICTURE BOOKS

[Happy Birthday, Trees](#) by Karen Rostoker-Gruber, ages 0-3
A Black Jewish boy in a kippah (skullcap) and two White Jewish children work together to plant a tree in this board book celebrating Tu B'shvat, the Birthday of the Trees.

[It's Challah Time: 20th Anniversary Edition](#) by Latifa Berry Kropf, ages 2-5
A diverse preschool class works together to make challah, the braided bread eaten during Shabbat, the Jewish Sabbath. Photos of Black children are among those on the cover and throughout the book's pages.

[Ezra's BIG Shabbat Question](#) by Aviva Brown, ages 4-8
Black Jewish Ezra seeks advice from his family and his rabbi about whether it's permissible to tie knots on Shabbat in this #ownvoices picture book.

[I Am the Tree of Life: A Jewish Yoga Book](#) by Rabbi Mychal Copeland, ages 4-8
Judaically-inspired yoga poses are demonstrated by diverse children. Features a Black Jewish child in tree pose on the cover.

[Who's Got the Etrog?](#) by Jane Kohuth, ages 4-8
Auntie Sanyu is a member of the Abayudaya, a Jewish community in Uganda. In this whimsical picture book, she celebrates the harvest holiday of Sukkot with animal friends who love the lemony scent of the etrog, or citron.

[Let's Talk About Race](#) by Julius Lester, ages 4-8
In this #ownvoices picture book, Black Jewish Lester directly addresses readers to point out that everyone's story and appearance is different, but we are all the same on the inside. Lester's adult autobiography [Lovesong](#) chronicles the spiritual journey that led him to convert to Judaism.

[What Makes Someone a Jew?](#) by Lauren Seidman, ages 4-8
Illustrated with photographs of diverse Jewish children, this simple nonfiction title makes it clear that Judaism is not dependent on physical characteristics.

[Always an Olivia](#) by Carolivia Herron, ages 7-10
In this #ownvoices story based on the author's family history, a Black grandmother shares stories with her granddaughter of their White Jewish ancestors who fled the Spanish Inquisition and were captured by pirates before making their way to America.

NOVELS

[Glixman in a Fix](#) by Rebecca Klempler, ages 8-13

In this action-packed story, White and Black Orthodox Jewish friends work together to solve a mystery. Some serious issues are addressed, including mental health, and community attitudes towards Black Jews. Note that this book, from an Orthodox press, assumes familiarity with customs and vocabulary.

[...Too Far From Home](#) by Naomi Shmuel, ages 8-13

Jewish Meskerem is a biracial Israeli girl of mixed Ethiopian/American heritage, who lies about her background when she encounters racism from classmates. Her grandmother helps her take pride in the Ethiopian community's efforts to reach safety in Israel and to come to terms with her intersectional identity. The White British author is married to a Black Ethiopian man and their children are biracial Israelis, making this an #ownvoices adjacent story.

[The Length of a String](#) by Elissa Brent Weissman, ages 10-14

Alternating voices tell the stories of White Jewish Anna, fleeing war-torn Europe in 1941, and Imani, her adopted Black great-granddaughter who has discovered Anna's diary. Connecting with family history helps Imani gain the courage to make an unusual bat mitzvah request: to seek out her birth parents.

[Little & Lion](#) by Brandy Colbert, ages 14-17

Black Suzette and her mom converted to Judaism when they became a family with White Jewish Lionel and his dad, but their story includes many intersectional identities: Suzette is exploring her bisexuality and Lionel is struggling with bipolar disorder. This novel deftly weaves these many strands together to show us a strong and supportive sibling bond.

[Ariel Samson: Freelance Rabbi](#) by MaNishtana, ages 18+
This rollicking semi-autobiographical #ownvoices adult novel features the funny yet thoughtful adventures of a Black Orthodox Jewish rabbi. Also check out MaNishtana's "not autobiography," [Thoughts From a Unicorn: 100% Black, 100% Jewish, 0% Safe](#).



THE "LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR" SERIES

The [Love Your Neighbor](#) series of book lists was created by the Association of Jewish Libraries to grow readers' understanding of the Jewish religion and its people.

The Association of Jewish Libraries, established in 1966, is the leading authority on Judaic librarianship. AJL promotes Jewish literacy through enhancement of libraries and library resources and through leadership for the profession and practitioners of Judaica librarianship. The Association fosters access to information, learning, teaching and research relating to Jews, Judaism, the Jewish experience and Israel. AJL is an affiliate of the American Theological Library Association, the Association for Jewish Studies, and the American Library Association.

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